# ॥ आनन्दलहरी सार्थ ॥

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भवानि स्तोतुं त्वां प्रभवति चतुर्भिर्न वदनैः
प्रजानामीशानस्त्रिपुरमथनः पञ्चभिरपि ।
न षड्भिः सेनानीर्दशशतमुखैरप्यहिपतिः
तदान्येषां केषां कथय कथमस्मिन्नवसरः ॥ १

Oh Goddess Bhavani, Brahma, the creator is unable to extol your qualities even though he has four faces, Shiva who destroyed Tripura and who has five faces, Subrahmanya, the commander of the forces of the Devas who has six faces and even Adi Shesha who has a thousand mouths/heads cannot adequately describe your qualities or praise you. How then can the others?

Goddess Bhavani is incomparable. In this verse the difficulty in describing adequately the attributes and qualities of the Goddess by mere mortals has been brought out. Brahma has four faces and is the repository of the Four Vedas. Shiva as DakShinamurthy is knowledge personified. Subrahmanya is renowned for not only the beauty of form but for valour and above all considered to be very meaning of the word OM and one who explained the meaning of OM to Lord Shiva Himself and thus earned the title Swaminatha. Adisesha, the thousand headed is also repository of knowledge; yet none of these Gods themselves are capable of adequately expressing the greatness of the Goddess. How then can a mere mortal find adequate expression? says the Poet in the Acharya, expressing his great humility before venturing to put down in words the incomparable attributes of the Goddess.

घृतक्षीरद्राक्षामधुमधुरिमा कैरपि पदैः
विशिष्यानाख्येयो भवति रसनामात्र विषयः ।
तथा ते सौन्दर्यं परमशिवदृङ्मात्रविषयः
कथंकारं ब्रूमः सकलनिगमागोचरगुणे ॥ २॥

The sweetness of ghee, milk, grapes and honey cannot be described adequately in word to bring out their sweetness. It has to be experienced by tasting each of them with one’s own tongue. In a similar manner the manifold attributes and qualities that you have, Oh Goddess, are not capable of being expressed in word as they are not understood even by Vedas and to Lord Parameshwara’s eyes alone they are revealed.

The tongue has two major functions - of taste and speech. In knowing and communicating the greatness of the Goddess, speech is useless just as it is useless in communicating exactly what sweetness tastes like. The sweetness of Madhu or honey, of the sweet grapes or milk or ghee can be experienced by the tongue when it performs the functions of taste and this taste is known only to one's own tongue; but even one's own tongue after tasting the sweetness cannot describe and communicate the sweetness in words. The ineffable sweetness and greatness of the Goddess have not been comprehended even by the Vedas and therefore have remained inaccessible to and beyond expression by Vedas. Even what is revealed by the Vedas is difficult to comprehend and has been understood only by a few and even among those who understand, the level of understanding varies depending upon the depth of their inner experience. When such is the case how can one comprehend the myriad qualities of Goddess?

Lord Shiva alone can know the greatness and beauty of His Consort, the Goddess Bhavani. But even if he comprehends, one's words not being good enough to describe what one sees or experiences, Lord Shiva himself will not be able to adequately describe Bhavani. Each Bhakta will therefore have to experience the compassion or have the glimpse of the beautiful form of the Goddess to the maximum extent possible by one's own devotion and perception. The efforts to have a fuller and better comprehension will have to be continuous because the qualities are limitless, the greatness is incomparable and the beauty is beyond description.

मुखे ते ताम्बूलं नयनयुगळे कज्जलकला
ललाटे काश्मीरं विलसति गळे मौक्तिकलता ।
स्फुरत्काञ्ची शाटी पृथुकटितटे हाटकमयी
भजामि त्वां गौरीं नगपतिकिशोरीमविरतम् ॥ ३॥

Oh Gauri, daughter of Himavan, you are so auspicious with betel juice in your mouth, streaks of collyrium in your eyes, Kumkum on your forehead and a necklace of pearls adoring your neck and golden yellow Saree secured with a resplendent waistband around your broad waist. I am your devotee always (constantly meditating on you).

To the devotee the object of worship and meditation should be pleasant and auspicious in order to visualise it and meditate upon. The divine mother in all her auspicious glory as would appear to a cultured Indian mind is pictured here by Acharya Bhagavatpada. The Tamboola, tasty and pleasant smelling, is a sign of auspiciousness and good wishes in the Indian household (Tobacco is not part of Tamboola). The tender leaves of the betel creeper along with the betel nut to which mouth fresheners like camphor are added are offered on all auspicious occasions in a Hindu household. They are also offered as part of sixteen upacharas in any puja to a deity after food or Naivedya is offered. The following stanzas will be familiar to those who offer Puja in the traditional way to a deity:
पूगीफलसमायुक्तं नागवल्ली दलैर्युतं कर्पूरचुर्णसंयुक्तं ताम्बूलं प्रतिगृह्यताम् ॥
The beautifying collyrium applied to the eyes, the Kumkum on the forehead and ornaments worn round the neck and the hips indicate auspiciousness. Visualising in one's mind the auspicious beautiful form of the Goddess. One must pray to Her for the auspicious things of life

विराजन्मन्दारद्रुमकुसुमहारस्तनतटी
नदद्वीणानादश्रवणविलसत्कुण्डलगुणा
नताङ्गी मातङ्गी रुचिरगतिभङ्गी भगवती
सती शम्भोरम्भोरुहचटुलचक्षुर्विजयते ॥ ४॥

The garland of flowers from Mandara tree adorns her chest where nestles the Veena. The dangling of pendants of the ear rings shine and sparkle when her ears are intent on listening to the subtle notes of the Veena. She who is the daughter of Sage Matanga with her body slightly bowed (through modesty) and with graceful gaits and beautiful lotus like eyes shines in all splendour as Goddess Bhagavati. the consort of Shiva.

The poet Bhagavatpada now visualises the beauty and grace of the Goddess in another pleasant form for facility of worship and meditation. The beautiful flowers adorn the beautiful form and by adorning the form of the Goddess become indeed resplendent. The melodious music of the Veena held close to the ear of the Goddess depicts the beauty of sound of music. The grace of movements and the natural feminine modesty as indicated by the slightly bent form of the Goddess while playing the Veena

and her eyes darting here and there depict the divine and beauteous form of the consort of Shiva ever ready to shower blessings on her devotees. Beauty and grace, beauty of form and gracefulness of movements, the beautiful sound emanating from a beautiful Veena so gracefully played, the beautiful and lustrous flowers round the neck of the Goddess, nestling and resting along with Veena undulating with the beautiful movements of the body, the auspicious and graceful glance from the beautiful eyes, all these give the devotee a wonderful enthralling personification of beauty for contemplation.

**नवीनार्कभ्राजन्मणिकनकभूषणपरिकरैः**
**वृताङ्गी सारङ्गीरुचिरनयनाङ्गीकृतशिवा ।**
**तडित्पीता पीताम्बरललितमञ्जीरसुभगा**
**ममापर्णा पूर्णा निरवधिसुखैरस्तु सुमुखी ॥ ५॥**

Her body is adorned by gold ornaments studded with precious gems as beautiful and resplendent as the rising sun. Her eyes beautiful like those of a fawn have captivated Lord Shiva himself. Dazzling like a streak of lightning and wearing a golden yellow dress and beautiful anklets she is very embodiment of auspiciousness. May the Goddess Aparna with her full and happy face confer her happiness and auspiciousness on me.

In this sloka the poet saint, Sankara, describes the auspiciousness of the form of the Goddess. Only an auspicious Goddess can confer auspiciousness on others. The glorious form of the rising sun is generally considered auspicious. The yellow golden rays of the rising sun bring happiness and joy to all living things. Beautiful gold ornaments studded with precious gems are auspicious. The golden yellow peetambara or dress is also considered auspicious. A smiling happy and full face is auspicious and bespeaks of joy and happiness. Here the splendour of the Goddess in all her auspiciousness is likened to all these. Above all the very embodiment of auspiciousness, Shiva himself is enthralled by the grace and form of Goddess Aparna. The word Aparna अपर्णा means without parna or leaves. (Perhaps while doing penance as Uma she abstained from eating even leaves!). The Goddess is likened to a creeper without leaves. The word also means one who frees from indebtedness अप + ऋण. For one who is in debt financially and otherwise, the Goddess

bestows freedom from debts and financial worry.

हिमाद्रेः संभूता सुललितकरैः पल्लवयुता
सुपुष्पा मुक्ताभिर्भ्रमरकलिता चालकभरैः ।
कृतस्थाणुस्थाना कुचफलनता सूक्तिसरसा
रुजां हन्त्री गन्त्री विलसति चिदानन्दलतिका ॥ ६॥

The Goddess is verily a walking chidananda creeper born in the Himalayas. Her hands are like the tender leaves, the pearl ornaments resembling flowers, entwining round the sturdy pillar like form of Parameshwara, her breasts resembling fruits, her speech full of substance or Rasa she removes all ailments.

The Goddess is verily a walking chidananda creeper which entwines round a tree and has curative properties. The creeper is a Himalayan creeper. Himalayas are known to be the home of medicinal herbs. The creeper needs a stout tree for support. Here Parameshwara is the tree round which creeper Parvati has entwined herself inseparably. The tender hands of the Goddess are like the tender leaves of the creeper; the flowers are the pearl ornaments and the full breasts are likened to the fruits (kuchaphala means having fruits shaped like the female breast or the pomegranate). When flowers are in bloom on the creeper the big bees hover around them. Here also the beautiful tresses of the Goddess attract the bees. The only difference is that unlike the ordinary creepers the Goddess is a moving and walking plant. The plant contains juicy substances. The speech of the Goddess also is full of substance and meaning. The medicinal plant only heals bodily diseases. But the Chidananda creeper that She is, the Goddess, cures all types of ailments.

सपर्णामाकीर्णां कतिपयगुणैः सादरमिह
श्रयन्त्यन्ये वल्लीं मम तु मतिरेवं विलसति ।
अपर्णैका सेव्या जगति सकलैर्यत्परिवृतः
पुराणोऽपि स्थाणुः फलति किल कैवल्यपदवीम् ॥ ७॥

Though many others in this world lovingly cherish and depend upon creepers which have leaves and several good qualities, to me it appears that only that Lata or creeper which is Aparna or leafless is worthy of being cherished by all in this world which entwining round the old tree makes

it yield fruit in the form of eternal bliss.

Aparna as seen in shloka 5, is another name for the auspicious Goddess Bhavani. Parameshwara or Lord Shiva is compared in this sloka to an old tree. The reference is to his agelessness and permanence. Such an ancient tree is entwined by the leafless creeper or Aparna meaning that the Goddess Bhavani is inseparably attached to and is part of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva by Himself is austere, clad in next to nothing, and presents an appearance that he has no wealth or gifts to bestow on devotees. But the auspicious Goddess by her union with Him makes Him also yield manifold blessings for devotees, leading them finally to salvation, self realisation and eternal bliss. Shankaracharya, therefore, considers that the Goddess is supreme and is worthy of being worshipped. The leafless creeper, therefore, in the lithe and beautiful form of the Goddess is far superior to the apparently attractive leafy creepers which many seek.

विधात्री धर्माणां त्वमसि सकलाम्नायजननी
त्वमर्थानां मूलं धनदनमनीयांघ्रिकमले ।
त्वमादिः कामानां जननि कृतकन्दर्पविजये
सतां मुक्तेर्बीजं त्वमसि परमब्रह्ममहिषी ॥ ८॥

You who are the source of all Vedas are also the fountainhead of all Dharma. At your feet, Kubhera, the lord of all riches prostrates with reverence because you (are the source of all wealth) have created all the wealth in the Universe. You who have defeated Manmatha, the God of Love, are the very origin of Love itself. Oh Consort of the supreme Lord, Parameshwara, verily you are the very seed of MokSha for the devout seekers.

Dharma, Artha, Kama and MokSha are the four Purusharthas sought after in this world. If the first three are sought in that order to achieve the fourth, one has to lead a worthwhile life. Knowledge of the Vedas and other sacred texts traditionally learnt in all humility gives one wisdom and the pursuit of Kama or desire according to Dharma leads to happiness. Though Artha or material wealth is necessary, it has to be aquired only in Dharmic ways. The material wealth should not be used to one’s unbridled desires but should be so utilised to love and enjoy

desired objects in a controlled way according to Dharma. When thus Artha and Kama are pursued in a Dharmic way, mokSha or release from bondage is easier. Since the Divine Mother is the very source of Dharma, Artha, Kama and MokSha, devotion or Bhakti to Her brings to the devotee all the four Purusharthas in the required measure at the appropriate time and makes the life enjoyable, happy, worthwhile and fruitful.

प्रभूता भक्तिस्ते यदपि न ममालोलमनसः
त्वया तु श्रीमत्या सदयमवलोक्योऽहमधुना ।
पयोदः पानीयं दिशति मधुरं चातकमुखे
भृशं शङ्के कैर्वा विधिभिरनुनीता मम मतिः ॥ ९॥

Though because of my vacillating (restless) mind my devotion to you is not steady (constant), I deserve now to be blessed with your auspicious and compassionate glance. Like the dark rain clouds giving the refreshingly sweet (rain) water to the (thirsty) Chataka bird (and quenches its thirst) so also only your auspicious compassionate glance can steady my mind. I doubt very much whether any other method can achieve it.

The vacillating wandering human mind flits from thought to thought and is never steady and fixed at any one thought for long. Steadfast devotion to the Divine Mother is therefore difficult normally for the human mind unless it is helped by divine will and divine grace of Mother. The Chataka bird depends on the falling rain to quench its thirst. It opens the mouth and waits for the rain to come so that its thirst can be quenched. Rains come from the heavens Godsent, unasked and Chataka bird fed with the fresh
sweet drops of rain water feels happy and satisfied. Similarly it is only the divine grace that can satisfy the longing of the Bhakta even to have steadfast devotion. The control of one's mind is difficult. One's effort however great cannot succeed always. To have steadfast and deep devotion to Goddess, the mind must necessarily dwell on Her form and attributes. But how to fix the mind which flits from thought to thought and is never at one place ? For this compassionate Goddess must render her help by allowing her gaze to fall on the striving devotee and aid him in keeping his mind steady in devotion. In short to have Bhakti itself, the Divine Mother's grace is a 'must'. There is no other way.

कृपापाङ्गालोकं वितर तरसा साधुचरिते
न ते युक्तोपेक्षा मयि शरणदीक्षामुपगते ।
न चेदिष्टं दद्यादनुपदमहो कल्पलतिका
विशेषः सामान्यैः कथमितरवल्लीपरिकरैः ॥ १०॥

Do not forsake me who have sought refuge in thee, but direct your compassionate glance towards me without any delay. Oh goddess of incomparable virtue, what difference is there between the Kalpaka VrikShA and the other trees and plants if the former does not grant the heart's desire of those who seek it and pray to it?

The Divine Mother's compassionate glance is like Kalpaka VrikSha. The Kamadhenu and Kalpaka VrikSha are the legendary cow and tree respectively
which grant one's prayers. The Kalpaka Vriksa will lose its reputation if this quality is lost and if it becomes like any other ordinary tree.
Here the devotee in the Acharya prays that the Divine Mother who grants the wishes of devotees should immediately without losing time and without hesitation bless him, the devotee, by her auspicious glance full of love and compassion because he , the devotee, has sought asylum at her feet (Sharanagati) and it will not behoove Her who is compassion personified to reject him.

महान्तं विश्वासं तव चरणपङ्केरुहयुगे
निधायान्यन्नैवाश्रितमिह मया दैवतमुमे ।
तथापि त्वच्चेतो यदि मयि न जायेत सदयं
निरालम्बो लम्बोदरजननि कं यामि शरणम् ॥ ११॥

Oh Goddess Uma, I have so much confidence and faith in your lotus feet that I have not thought it fit to to seek refuge in any other god. Inspite of this if you do not show compassion towards me, where else and to whom else can I go for protection O Mother of Ganapati Uma, the consort of Shiva and the mother of Ganapati, the remover of all obstacles, is addressed directly for giving protection and solace to the devotee who has surrendered at her lotus feet to the exclusion of every other deity. The principle of Sharanagati शरणागति requires absolute surrender to God's Will, born out of deep faith and devotion

and the devotee not only seeks solace but immense hope that the prayers will be heard out of love and compassion. God will lift him up who has fallen at His feet. Single minded and steadfast devotion and immense faith are required on the part of the devotee.

अयः स्पर्शे लग्नं सपदि लभते हेमपदवीं
यथा रथ्यापाथः शुचि भवति गंगौघमिलितम् ।
तथा तत्तत्पापैरतिमलिनमन्तर्मम यदि
त्वयि प्रेम्णासक्तं कथमिव न जायेत विमलम् ॥ १२॥

By contact with the touchstone called "Sparsamani" Iron gets the status of Gold instantly. Water which passes through gutters which joins the torrential waters of the Ganga gets elevated to the status of "Ganga Jal" Therefore how can my mind, though sullied by several sins, not attain purity by devotion to you ?

A base metal gets instantly elevated to the status of precious metal because of its contact with the touchstone which is used to test gold. Water from various places and running even through gutters joining the mighty river Ganga gets merged with the flowing waters and loses its identity as gutter water or impure water. Once it has joined the Ganga and has become one with the flowing waters of the Ganga even the impure water becomes purified in the Ganga flow and current and attains the status of Ganga Jal which is considered not only sacred for bathing but considered for ceremonial sipping so that all our sins are washed away. The devotee's mind constantly dwells on the feet of the Divine Mother in deep devotion. The Acharya here concludes that however sullied by one's sins, the mind of the devotee cannot but get freed from impurities (sins) if it gets bound by devotion to Divine Mother. The unquestioning and complete devotion to the Goddess cleanses the mind of impurities and makes it pure.

त्वदन्यस्मादिच्छाविषयफललाभे न नियमः
त्वमर्थानामिच्छाधिकमपि समर्था वितरणे ।
इति प्राहुः प्राञ्चः कमलभवनाद्यास्त्वयि मनः
त्वदासक्तं नक्तं दिवमुचितमीशानि कुरु तत् ॥ १३॥

There is no one other than you, Oh Goddess, for granting one's heart's

desire. In fact Brahma and ancient sages have declared that you shower even on the ignorant more blessings than even what they have prayed for. I would therefore make this request, Oh Consort of Ishana, that you make my mind attached to you throughout day and night.

Learned persons who can find out appropriate Vedic mantras or stotras to praise the Goddess are sure to attain their heart's desire through devotion and prayer. But the divine mother is so compassionate and loving towards her children that the ignorant who do not know how to pray and what to pray for need not be despondent; for she knowing what they want and their limitations, grants unto them even more than what they can think of; because she knows what to bestow in her children. All she requires is love and devotion. The Acharya therefore, prays, that his mind be attached in devotion to the divine mother. This devotion and attachment of the mind to the divine mother should not merely be in the waking hours during day time but even during night when one is asleep. Thus he prays that both in the wakeful and the sleeping states, the mind should not get detached from devotion to Mother. This is Acharya's prayer and this should be our prayer also to the Divine Mother.

स्फुरन्नानारत्नस्फटिकमयभित्तिप्रतिफल
त्त्वदाकारं चञ्चच्छशधरकलासौधशिखरम् ।
मुकुन्दब्रह्मेन्द्रप्रभृतिपरिवारं विजयते
तवागारं रम्यं त्रिभुवनमहाराजगृहिणि ॥ १४॥

Oh Great Goddess, your abode is shining and resplendent with the different precious stones fixed to the tower domes reaching the moon. In such a beautiful abode surrounded by Brahma, Vishnu, Indra and other Devas (extolling your greatness) you shine as the empress of the three Worlds (being the consort of the Supreme Lord of the three Worlds, Parameshwara).

The poet here sets at rest any doubts that a devotee may have about the capacity of the Goddess to shower blessings on him. When a devotee worships the Goddess he is not worshipping some impoverished person but the consort of the Lord of the three Worlds. The incomparable beauty and splendour of Her abode, the greatness of other devotees who throng around her should make it clear that the Goddess is Supreme and one who

is eminently entitled to our devotion and worship.

निवासः कैलासे विधिशतमखाद्याः स्तुतिकराः
कुटुम्बं त्रैलोक्यं कृतकरपुटः सिद्धिनिकरः ।
महेशः प्राणेशस्तदवनिधराधीशतनये
न ते सौभाग्यस्य क्वचिदपि मनागस्ति तुलना ॥ १५॥

There is nothing anywhere to compare with your Soubhagya or auspiciousness, Oh Parvati, daughter of the King of mountains. For Kailasa is your abode, the courtiers who praise you are Brahma, Indra and other Gods, all the three worlds are your family, the eight Siddhis are at your beck and call and the Lord Supreme is the Lord of your heart.

Theme of shloka 14 is continued here. The author repeats that the Divine Mother because of her uniquely supreme position is the most auspicious one for worship.

वृषो वृद्धो यानं विषमशनमाशा निवसनं
श्मशानं क्रीडाभूर्भुजगनिवहो भूषणविधिः
समग्रा सामग्री जगति विदितैव स्मररिपोः
यदेतस्यैश्वर्यं तव जननि सौभाग्यमहिमा ॥ १६॥

Parameshwara is famed as the destroyer of Smara or Manmatha, the God of Love. His vehicle is an old bull. Poison is his food. He wears directions as his clothes. The cremation ground is his playground. He wears snakes as ornaments. These facts are well known to the whole world. Oh Divine Mother, there is no doubt that in spite of all these, his Aiswaryam or overlordship is solely attributable to your Soubhagya or great auspiciousness.

Manmatha is the God of Love. When Shiva was in deep meditation and Parvati
was attending on Him, Indra and other Gods persuaded Manmatha to disturb the meditation of Shiva, by aiming at Him his famed love shaft so that Shiva would notice Parvati and her ministrations and would marry her. He would beget Kumara who was destined to destroy the Asuras troubling and humiliating the Devas constantly. However though the reluctant Manmatha’s love-arrow aimed at Shiva succeeded in disturbing His meditation it also provoked His anger and the sparks which flew out of His third eye

reduced Manmatha to ashes. Shiva who could destroy Manmatha thus is known for austerity and sternness. Added to this are His other unattractive qualifications viz. an ancient bull (Nandikeshwara) as a vehicle, snakes worn around his neck etc. When Devas and Asuras churned the milky ocean to get celestial nectar or Amrita, the giant snake Vasuki who was used as a churning rope emitted deadly poison. The poison would have destroyed the world. On a prayer from everyone, Devas and Asuras, the great Mahadeva drank the poison to rescue the entire creation from suffering. This incident is alluded to as Shiva having poison as His food. Shiva is the ultimate destroyer who annihilates all creation when the Time comes. He is also reputed to be having His abode in the cremation ground. Thus Shiva is regarded as a fearful wrathful God and even remembering these attributes of His will make any strong willed person tremble. In spite of these famous attributes, He is considered as the embodiment of auspiciousness and prosperity. The devotee in the Acharya concludes that this is attributable to the grandeur and greatness the Soubhagya of the Divine Mother, who is the consort of Shiva.

अशेषब्रह्माण्डप्रलयविधिनैसर्गिकमतिः
श्मशानेष्वासीनः कृतभसितलेपः पशुपतिः ।
दधौ कण्ठे हालाहलमखिलभूगोलकृपया
भवत्याः संगत्याः फलमिति च कल्याणि कलये ॥ १७॥

Shiva as destroyer or Samharamurti continues the annihilation of the entire Universe when the Time comes. Making himself at home in burning ghats his body is smeared with ashes. He, the Lord of the entire creation, swallowed and stored round his neck the deadly poison, halahala, out of his great compassion for the entire world. To my mind Oh auspicious goddess, it appears that this was possible only because of your association with him.

The idea contained in shloka 16 is contained here. In spite of unattractive attributes like being the destroyer, the dweller in places of death and so on, Parameshwara is the Lord of the Universe and worshipped as such. This greatness and compassionate action of Siva in swallowing the

deadly poison is also due to the beneficial influence of the auspicious Goddess as she held Shiva's throat tightly and prevented the poison from travelling downwards and killing him due to which he survived and became 'nIlakantha' (blue throated).. So surmises the poet.

त्वदीयं सौन्दर्यं निरतिशयमालोक्य परया
भियैवासीद्गंगा जलमयतनुः शैलतनये ।
तदेतस्यास्तस्माद्वदनकमलं वीक्ष्य कृपया
प्रतिष्ठामातन्वन्निजशिरसिवासेन गिरिशः ॥ १८॥

Oh Parvati, daughter of the King of mountains, Ganga's face became small and pale, seeing your great and incomparable beauty. Seeing the pitiable face the Lord of mountains, Girisa, out of compassion gave her a place to stay on his head.

Acharya here indulges in poetic fancy. Himavan is the king of the mountains. Parvati is the daughter of Himavan. Rivers are also considered daughters of mountains since they have their origins in mountains. The river Ganga starts from the Himalayas. Hence Ganga is also the daughter of Himavan. The river is beautiful and majestic in its own way. But seeing the incomparable beauty of Parvati, her sister the poet visualises that Ganga became pale emaciated and turned into water. Seeing her pitiable face, out of compassion, Lord Shiva who is Girisa or overlord of mountainpeaks staying in Kailasa, gave her an honoured place in his matted locks. The allusion is here to the story when Ganga descended from the heavens and out of pride felt that nobody could withstand her torrential downpour. Shiva absorbed the water in his locks and Ganga remained in His matted locks and later when King Bhagiratha prayed that Ganga be allowed to flow to the earth, a small portion of water collected in His locks was allowed to flow out. Thus Ganga came to stay caught in the matted hair of the Lord. Shiva is therefore depicted as having Ganga on his head. Ganga is depicted as a Goddess also. The imagery and the flight of fancy are presented here only to describe the great beauty of form of Parvati.

विशालश्रीखण्डद्रवमृगमदाकीर्णघुसृण
प्रसूनव्यामिश्रं भगवति तवाभ्यङ्गसलिलम् ।
समादाय स्रष्टा चलितपदपांसून्निजकरैः

समाधत्ते सृष्टिं विबुधपुरपङ्केरुहदृशाम् ॥ १९॥

Oh Bhagavati, Brahma, the creator creates the beautiful maidens of heaven by gathering with his own hands the dust falling from your divine feet and the water you have bathed in while taking the oil bath, which is scented and fragrant with red sandalwood paste and saffron mixed with kasturi.

Brahma, the creator in his search for materials for creating the beautiful forms of celestial damsels of Devaloka found that the fragrant water used by the Goddess Parvati for washing her beautiful body combined with the dust of her feet is ideal material for fashioning the beautiful feminine forms.

Abhisheka or ceremonial bath is one of the six upacharas offered to a deity. The abhisheka teertha or water and other material used for the Abhisheka which flows out is regarded as sacred having innumerable properties such as curing of diseases, washing away one's sin etc. Wearing the dust from holy feet possesses also great qualities capable of conferring prosperity and happiness on the devotee. If that is the case with the dust from the feet of holy men, words cannot describe the unique qualities of the dust from the feet of the Divine Mother. Brahma, the Creator and all other Gods do penance to get a sprinkling of the dust from the divine feet of the Mother. It is this dust and the divine Abhsheka Teertha fragrant with many rare substances of medicinal fragrance that Brahma chooses as material in his work of creation to fashion feminine beauty in the world of Gods. The author here extols the incomparably divine beauty of the Divine Mother who is Bhagavati, the repository of all auspiciousness and prosperity and happiness.

वसन्ते सानन्दे कुसुमितलताभिः परिवृते
स्फुरन्नानापद्मे सरसि कलहंसालिसुभगे ।
सखीभिः खेलन्तीं मलयपवनान्दोलितजले
स्मरेद्यस्त्वां तस्य ज्वरजनितपीडापसरति ॥ २०॥

One who thinks of you sporting with your friends in the cool waters of the lake set in gentle motion by the cool southern breeze with beautiful swans majestically and happily cackling and chirping away amidst the blooming lotuses and with creepers and vines full of flowers of the

spring all around will be freed from the troubles and suffering caused by various illnesses.

In this concluding sloka, the author wants the devotee to visualise the Divine Mother in pleasant happy surroundings. Spring is the pleasantest of seasons when the flowers are in bloom, the trees and plants have put on new leaves, the waters in the lakes are clear, the lotuses bloom in all glory and the birds chirp and sing in happiness. Beautiful swans happily move around the beautiful lotuses. The pleasant and gentle southern breeze wafts through the flower laden branches of trees and the air is cool and filled with fragrance. The cool breeze gently stirs the cool waters of the lake where the lotus flowers are in bloom and the swans float and glide amidst them. The devotee must visualise the Goddess as playfully and happily enjoying in such pleasant surroundings with her maids in attendance. This will cool the burning fevers of the tormented Bhakta and bring peace and tranquility to him. Meditating upon the Goddess thus will cure one not only of illnesses of the body just as cool water cools down a heated body but it will cure one of all illnesses notably the disease of the interminable cycle of births and death called Samsara.

Conclusion : In the above 20 verses of Ananda Lahari Stotra the Acharya visualises the Goddess Bhavani as happiness and auspiciousness personified and recommends that the Goddess should be so worshipped and meditated upon in pleasant surroundings so that we may be freed of all ailments and miseries. Great happiness, prosperity and peace of mind can be achieved through the happy and blissful contemplation of the divine, beautiful and auspicious form of the Supreme Mother.

Needless to say that the Grace of the Mother will fall on all her children and in greater measure on all those children (devotees) who surrender at Her feet placing implicit trust in Her strength, love and compassion.

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॥ इति श्रीमच्छङ्कराचार्यविरचिता आनन्दलहरी सम्पूर्णा ॥

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